(b) whether any special drive has been taken up to fill-up the backlog vacancies of the above categories; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRIMANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) to (c) With a view to carrying out one of the action points contained in the Common Minimum Programme of the UPA Government, contemplating that all reservation quotas, including those relating to promotions, will be fulfilled in a time-bound manner, a Special Recruitment Drive for filling the backlog of reserved vacancies for SCs and STs in the Direct Recruitment Quota and the Promotion Quota has been launched by the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions and this Ministry. No Special Drive has been launched for OBCs. This Ministry has no subordinate offices. There are no backlog vacancies for SCs/STs in the Ministry.

Higher allocations for States

*5. PROF. ALKA BALRAM KSHATRIYA:
DR. T SUBBARAMI REDDY:

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether he has agreed to provide higher allocations for States as recommended by the Twelfth Finance Commission;

(b) if so, what are the total allocations that have been suggested;

(c) to what extent, they have been fully agreed to; and

(d) whether States are satisfied with the allocations made?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) to (d) Government of India has accepted all the financial recommendations relating to share of States in Union taxes and grants made by the Twelfth Finance Commission. Action Taken Report on the recommendations of the Finance Commission has been placed on the table of the House on 26th February, 2005.

The Twelfth Finance Commission has recommended total estimated transfer of Rs. 6,13,112.02 crore as the share of taxes of the States and has recommended grants amounting to Rs. 1,42,639.60 crore, totalling to

total transfer of Rs. 7,55,751.62 crore to the States over five year period between 2005-10. Government of India has agreed to implement these recommendations.

Government of India has not received any reaction from any State on the recommendations of the Commission until 28th February, 2005.

Implementation of VAT

*6. SHRISANJAYNIRUPAM:

SHRI RAJKUMAR DHOOT:

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether VAT is going to be implemented in all the States; and

(b) if so, the details about the criteria being implemented?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) In the meeting of the Empowered Committee of State Finance Ministers held on 18th June, 2004, States and Union Territories have arrived at broad consensus to introduce VAT w.e.f. 1st April, 2005. All Finance Ministers have affirmed their intention to introduce VAT w.e.f. 1st April, 2005, and a White Paper has also been released.

(b) The design of VAT to be implemented by States/UTs has been finalized by the Empowered Committee after due deliberations. The salient features of this design include uniform VAT rates across the States/UTs, input tax credit, zero-rating of exports, provision of self-assessment of tax by the dealers, threshold limit of upto rupees five lakhs of annual turnover for registration of dealers and provision for composition scheme for dealers having annual turnover upto rupees fifty lakhs.

Creation of a National Investment Fund out of the proceeds of disinvestment of PSUs

*7. SHRIMATISUKHBUNS KAUR:
SHRIMATIN. P. DURGA:

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have decided to set up **a** National Investment Fund with a corpus consisting of the proceeds from disinvestments of PSUs;